2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

34. During a hunt Ekianga's unmarried niece, Ekimanji, had charge of his two spears and lost these together with her own basket, full of meat. Her story was that she was standing about, waiting for the rest to join up after a beat, when she had to answer a call of nature. She went a few yards away, and on return found the two spears and the basket gone. She called out, and Masalito, who was nearby, came running over. She asked him to stand there while she went and searched, which she did. She could find no traces. He also searched, and neither could he. It then began to rain and they returned to camp.

The next day the hunt went back to the spot and searched all over but found nothing. They even repeated the hunt in the same spot, casting the nets and beating toward them. Nobody offered any suggestions as to what could have happened, other than that they must have been taken. Not a single individual was hinted at directly or indirectly. One of the hunters suggested it was a villager, for Mbuti don't steal, but everyone knew that no villager was anywhere about in the forest during the hunt. However, the explanation, weak as it was, was better than none and, if not accepted, it was certainly not denied. The matter was not mentioned again.

DISPUTES CONCERNING THE VILLAGE

35. It might be thought that the village would be a common source of dispute. Far from being so, the village most frequently occurs in disputes as above, as a means of ending a dispute without settling the blame on any Mbuti and thus hastening the process of fission. Even money is assimilated into the forest pattern of distribution of food, insofar as it is ever brought into the forest (see 29, above). The only real dispute over money in my records was because the money was received for a spear which had been stolen from one villager and sold back to another, and it was difficult to assess the correct apportionment of the "game" (a hundred francs) between the "hunters."

The village, however, was often being blamed for ill health, and with frequent justification, for sanitation, which was no problem for the Mbuti in the forest, was a major one in the village. The village also frequently took the blame for poor hunting, particularly if some individual or some group in the band (e.g., the women who did not beat) seemed to be genuinely to blame.

One dispute of major proportions, and one of the few which occasioned direct action, did, however, have its cause in the village. The